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ABSTRACT

Connecting reading and writing has become an important trend in teaching the language arts. Poetry, as a salient facet of the reading curriculum, integrates well with different purposes in writing. Poetry read aloud to students can assist learners to enjoy reading activities and develop the feeling and aesthetic dimension of learning, among other things. Whether it be an entire unit taught on poetry or a poem correlated with a science, mathematics, or social studies unit, it is vital that a proper introduction by the teacher take place. Developmental needs should be considered by the teacher when poetry is stressed in reading and writing connections. Reading poetry emphasizes holism in that the entire poem is read to students before a discussion to analyze its contents follows. Holism in poetry reading should stress providing background information to students prior to the "read aloud." Holism in poetry study is needed so that students reflect upon the inherent ideas, not on segments. Students should practice writing the particular kind of poem after it has been introduced. Imagery (used by poets) may be divided into two kinds: similes and alliteration. There are numerous types of poems for students to study and write: rhymed verse (couplets, triplets, quatrains, limericks), haiku, tankas, and free verse. Poetry written by the student may be placed in a binder for later reading. Poems may be studied in an integrated curriculum or in separate units of study. During sustained silent reading students may choose poetry for reading as well as prose. (NKA)

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Exploring Poetry: The Reading and Writing Connection.

by Marlow Ediger

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EXPLORING POETRY: THE READING AND WRITING CONNECTION

Connecting reading and writing has become an important trend in teaching the language arts. Poetry, as a salient facet of the reading curriculum, integrates well with different purposes in writing. Carefully chosen poems should be read aloud to pupils in class. Poetry read aloud to pupils should

1. encourage optimal listening on the learner's part.
2. emphasize securing the interests of listeners.
3. stress meaningful learning in that the content read makes sense.
4. possess purpose for reading.
5. provide intrinsic motivation for pupils to do more reading of diverse kinds of poems.
6. assist learners to enjoy reading activities.
7. help listeners in wanting to write poems.
8. guide learners to perceive relationships between reading poetry and writing.
9. develop the feeling and aesthetic dimension of learning.
10. stimulate wanting to learn more about creative use of words and language (See Gunning, 2000).

There are a plethora of kinds of poems which need to be emphasized in teaching and learning situations. Each kind involves a newness in reading poetry. Boring experiences must be avoided in poetry reading. Poetry stressed in the language arts needs to be on the developmental level of each pupil so that understanding of content is in evidence.

Introducing Poetry to Pupils

The teacher needs to have a definite strategy planned to introduce a poem to learners. When supervising student teachers in the public schools, the author noticed that an entire unit on poetry is taught by a student teacher with cooperative teacher assistance. The two teachers, in many cases, have worked together as a teaching team. Whether it be an entire unit taught on poetry or a poem is correlated with a science, mathematics, or social studies unit, it is vital that a proper introduction should be in the offing The teacher may then read orally a poem to pupils using appropriate stress, pitch, and juncture to actively engage pupils in learning. If there are related pictures pertaining to the poem being read aloud, they should be shown to learners as the oral reading progresses. Young children, in particular, need to see illustrations dealing with the

poem read so that meaning is attached to the read aloud.

Reading poetry emphasizes holism in that the entire poem is read to pupils before a discussion to analyze its contents follows. Holism in poetry reading needs to stress providing background information to pupils prior to the read aloud. Background information provides readiness for listening and for later reading of the poem by pupils (Ediger, 2001, Chapter Seven). Thus to understand the ensuing poem to be read by the teacher, pupils may need the following experiences:

1. knowledge on the subject matter content. An illustration, object, and discussion, directly related to the poem, may provide the prerequisite knowledge.
2. novel use of selected words in the poem need attention at this point. The teacher may print these words contextually on the chalkboard for pupils to see and discuss, prior to reading the poem.

Holism in poetry study is needed so that pupils reflect upon the inherent ideas, not on segments. Beauty of language needs to be noticed in the poem. To take care of word recognition problems, pupils should follow the print discourse from their textbooks or from duplicated content at their desks, as the teacher reads aloud. The second reading should involve pupils in the read aloud. Rereading can be good as long as pupils remain interested in the poetry selection. Unknown and unrecognized words by pupils might then be mastered within the poem.

A discussion in small groups may follow the reading of the poem. How much segmentation of a poem should occur? Wholeness and meaning of the poem needs to remain intact. However, there are salient questions which may be raised by the teacher and the pupils to stimulate interest in the latter's literary achievement. These include the following as suggestions:

1. how did you feel about the poem's contents?
2. were there any words in the poem which were new to you? If so what did each new word in the poem mean to you?

Pupils should practice writing the particular kind of poem, after it has been introduced. Pupils then will have the prerequisite experiences to write the same kind of poem. For example, if a couplet has been observed in print discourse, read to pupils, followed by pupils reading the poem collaboratively with the teacher, then in sequence, the poem may be written by learners (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Eight).

Ingredients in Poetry Writing

Poets make use of imagery in writing. Imagery may be divided into two kinds. Similes make creative comparisons between two phenomenon using the words "like" and "as" indicated in the following examples:

1. The butterfly looked <u>like</u> smudged water color marks.

Here the butterfly is compared with smudged water color marks, in a creative manner.

2. The mouse scampered <u>as</u> if the world was coming to an end.

Here, a creative comparison is made between "the mouse scampered" with "the world coming to an end." Pupils should observe imagery in print, hear and enjoy it in its reading, followed by its use in written work.

Alliteration is another ingredient to place within a poem. Two or more words, in sequence, with the same beginning sound, make for alliteration. Poets frequently use alliteration as a poetic device; the following are examples:

1. The slippery, silver, sock fell off the clothes washer's edge. There are three words here which have the same beginning sound -- <u>slippery</u>, <u>silver</u>, and <u>sock</u>.

2. Hurried, husky Harry walked toward the tall, tame tree. There are two sets of words emphasizing alliteration --- hurried, husky, Harry; tall, tame, tree.

The use of alliteration adds novelty and originality in poetry writing. Colorful use of words adds richness in language within the framework of using poetic expressions. When ready, pupils need to use alliteration in poetry writing. This addition adds variety in writing poetry content (Ediger, 1991, 34-38).

Onomatopoeia, as a third poetic device, may become an inherent part of a poem. Onomatopoeia pertains to the use of echoic sounding words in poetry. There are a plethora of echoic sounds which pupils may brain storm and then use those selected to write poetry. Thus, a rock thrown into a pond may make a <u>splish</u>, <u>splash</u>, <u>splush</u> sound. The three underlined words make an echoic sounding set of words pertaining to a rock thrown into a pond. They also emphasize alliteration.

A carefully developed bulletin board with a caption and related illustrations may draw pupil attention to poetry writing. The print underneath each illustration should pertain to the kind of poem being studied/written as well as the poetic devices

stressed within sequential lessons. The bulletin board content should be changed as the lesson being taught stresses new objectives in the ongoing unit of study, be it a poetry writing unit or within a science or social studies unit. Pupil's attention should be drawn to ideas contained in the display as a motivator in poetry writing. Pictures of both men and women poets should be included in bulletin board displays so that boys and girls may both identify with different genders as writers of poetry (See Ediger, 1975, 258-260).

Kinds of Written Poetry

There are numerous poems for pupils to study and write. Rhymed verse is fascinating to hear and write for some pupils. Many primary grade pupils enjoy rhyme in a couplet when writing poetry. Couplets contain two lines with ending words rhyming. The following are examples of couplets:

1. The freshly mown hay lies in the hot sun
   waiting for the bailer to make bales and be done.

2. The bales of hay are eagerly eaten by the large cows
   in winter time when the days are cold and the sun bows.

The above two couplets with ending words rhyming may well be written by pupils in a social studies unit dealing with "The Farm." Ideas gleaned in the social studies may well be correlated with the writing of selected kinds of poetry. Poetry also may be written by pupils to indicate what has been learned in an ongoing unit of study.

Additional forms of rhymed verse for pupils to read and write are

1. triplets, three lines of verse, with all ending words rhyming.
2. quatrains, four lines, with all ending words rhyming.
3. limericks, five lines, with lines one, two, and five rhyming, as well as lines three and four rhyming. Appropriate rhythm and meter need to be stressed (See Bauer, 1995).

When readiness is in evidence, pupils may also be guided to read and write poetry containing a certain number of syllables per line such as

1. haiku with five, seven, five syllable sequence for each of the three lines of verse, respectively, such as in the following:

The boy on the farm
who worked very hard each day
won much fame later.

2. tankas with a five, seven, five, seven, seven number of syllables, respectively, for each of five lines of verse may be shown with the following:

The healthy farmer
with the latest equipment
works hard and wisely
to make a safe good living
and inherit the soul's earth.

Reading and writing free verse is preferred by selected pupils since it contains no necessary rhyme nor syllables as in the following example:

Driving a tractor while plowing is
enjoying nature and the out of doors
tiring if done for an entire day
looking back at times to watch the soil unfurl
staying focused and in touch
viewing the earth's environment
hoping no erosion will follow when rain falls
watching and waiting for the day to end
feeling rewarded at the end of the day.

Free verse is not limited to any exact number of lines per poem. The shape of the free verse may vary to fit the needs of the pupil. It may have imagery, alliteration, and/or onomatopoeia if desired by the writer (See Cole, 1984).

The pupil, when readiness is in evidence, may make a collection of favorite poems read. Poetry written may be placed in a binder for later reading. Poetry may be written individually or in collaboration with others. New kinds of poetry need to be in the offing and explored by pupils such as in the writing of diamantes and cinquains.

Reading and writing poetry should capture the interests of pupils. Certainly, interest in poetry should be encouraged and not hindered. Developmental needs must be considered by the teacher when poetry is stressed in reading and writing connections. Pupil input into the poetry curriculum should be emphasized. Thus, pupils need to have opportunities make

choices, from among alternatives, when poetry is selected for reading and writing. They need to perceive reasons for studying diverse forms of poetry and ingredients therein. Holism is important in studying poems and analyzation of a poem should assist learners in understanding and making use of its contents. There are individual differences among learners in any classroom. Each pupil needs to be helped to attain as optimally as possible. Pupils possess multiple intelligences and individual learning styles. They may work individually or in committees when reading and composing poems. Poems may be studied in an integrated curriculum or in separate units of study. Poems may also be read aloud to pupils each day during story time. During sustained silent reading (SSR), pupils may choose poetry for reading as well as prose. When individualized reading is a part of the regular reading program, pupils may read poetry as well as other kinds of written work. What has been read may become content for written products to be included in

1. a portfolio stressing different kinds of poetry.
2. a class or individual collection of bound poems.
3. a volume for the classroom library.
4. the sharing of ideas collaboratively in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance.
5. ongoing lessons and units of study (See Hoberman, 1994).

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